

CHRISTIANITY.

BY J. A. MILLER.

The issues involved in the consideration of the problem of human life are the ever-living and ever-recurring issues of successive ages.

And what marvel! Since they are freighted with immortal interests, bearing upon their wings the destinies of eternities gone by and eternities yet unborn.

What marvel I say that the never-ceasing echoes and re-echoes of the heart and brain "Who am I? Whence? Whither" appeal with profoundest acuteness to our whole being demanding an ultimatum in reply. Nor have these intense problems escaped notice. The world's greatest intellects have grappled with them in attempted solution. And the answers given by the time and tide of the world's thought have occupied the whole realm of theory from the grossest atheistic materialism to the wildest speculations of esoteric philosophy. The annunciations of a theory immediately attracted exponents who in turn gave to the world a rationale. Thus schools of Philosophy and systems of Religion were formed. Of these some indeed claimed no authority beyond that of their human promulgators; others maintained a Divine Revelation as the ground of their superior trustworthiness. And so ever and anon the champions of each have been driven like gladiators into the open court of many an Areopagus. Within the bars of this Forum I stand the Advocate of Christianity. Nothing less, than the deliberate conviction of the truth of Christianity, which approves itself to my whole nature as the purest and best light that God ever shed on the human heart and mind, is my apology.

Religion in the economy of human life occupies a sphere peculiarly its own. Religion and that capacity in man which we call the spiritual sense are forever inseparable. Religion is therefore universal and appears in some form wherever man is found. It alone can even approximate a solution of the fundamental metaphysical and philosophical problems of the race.

"Whatever physical science has done or can yet do it never has and never will bring us an inch nearer to the so-

lution of any of these fundamental problems."

If my motive in advocating Christianity to the exclusion and utter rejection of all other systems be impugned—this is my defense: Christianity is true. It is truth itself. The religion championed by these my brothers, believed in by many of the world's millions, I can not, I dare not countenance because I believe them to be error and darkness. I beg not to be misunderstood. I am not pronouncing sentence upon individual believers. But I antagonize the systems, if so they may be called, in which their faith rests, and I repeat I believe them to be gross and frivolous error.

And now I stop to inquire what are the recommendations upon which Buddha appeals for recognition and acceptance? And upon what foundation rests the claims of Ormuzd? And upon what consideration is Mohammed Allah worthy the homage of men? Wherein does Osiris find ground for pressing his suit? And Jesus, the Christ, does he present adequate excellency in life and doctrine to be worthy the thought of a man?

In this inquiry I appealed to the principles and practices to the doctrines and life, to the ideal and world worth, of the professors of Buddhism, of Confucianism, of Christianity. But you say, there are grand and sublime maxims taught in the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, the Koran; granted. So there are the most exalted ideals of life portrayed in some of the essays of moderns. Yet not one lays claim to having established a system of religion, not even a philosophy of life. But what, for example, is the spirit in its ideal character, and what the competency to grapple with life-issues and to supply the dynamics of life, and what the achievements of benevolence in the individual heart, the nation, the world, and what the terminus as expressed in the noun of Sakya-Muni.

Buddhism is without doubt the most excellent of these religions. What is its ultimate cultus? Let Bishop Bigandit answer: "What is the terminus of Buddhism, for example, with all its fine precepts and pure moral truths but atheism and nihilism?" By this end it has led the individual be-

liever even in the present age. What has it done for a nation? Buddhism rests upon strict individualism and has not established a single good government, not even in the land of its birth. Need I ask what has it done for the world?

But I asserted a moment since the par excellence of Christianity. What are the premises upon which we may safely rest such a conclusion?

Apart from faith—forsooth the most impregnable tower of strength to the soul—which receives Christianity as from God, there is but one court of appeal—reason.

Christianity in all its essential parts stands approved before this high tribunal. Experience and history prove this verdict unassailable.

Man is too noble and his life too sublime to entertain extravagant imaginary foibles. Christianity offers to him for contemplation an infinite ideal of conduct and possible attainment. Its ideal finds a basis in the individual. And the character contemplated by the humblest disciples is as majestic as that of his Christ.

Salvation, which to the Christian is but another term for that mode of life which is highest and best, is *not* as according to Zoroaster an eternal battle of good against evil, *not* as according to Buddha self-culture, but *Christ THE LIFE* in us.

Christianity in its ideal is not a narrow individualism, nor is it sectional or national but universal and all-embracing. It deals continually with the living present while lifting the veil of eternities and is all-comprehensive. It concerns itself with individuals, multitudes, ages. This is a philosophy commensurate with its ideal.

Christianity is worthy of the earnest contemplation of man because of the spirit that characterizes it.

The world knows no parallel to the progress, the enlightenment, the liberty and the love which measure the spirit of Christianity.

Christianity commends itself to the consideration of man because it shows itself to be a matchless world-force.

Indeed, there is no influence so mighty in an individual heart as that of Christianity. Its high ideal and magnanimous spirit conceived and com-